**C: Civil Society**

The purpose of this set of questions is to ascertain whether and to what extent civil society has engaged with their respective governments and militaries on the implications of the CRPD and UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) in relevant military operations (including peace keeping and peacebuilding operations) and what impact they can report from such engagement.

These are engagement-oriented questions and will be supplemented by more detailed policy questions directed at States (A: above) and operational questions directed at military authorities (B: above).

Please attach links to any relevant reports, trainings, press statements, or other documents.

QUESTIONS

1. Please provide information on whether and how your organization engages on the protection of persons with disabilities under international humanitarian law.

HelpAge International in Ukraine is closely engaged in the [protection of older persons with disabilities](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/SupportingTheAutonomyOlderPersons.aspx) living in the urban and rural remote areas of eastern Ukraine, faced with internal displacement or living on the front line of firing and sporadic rocket attacks. Over half of the older people living along the contact line in eastern Ukraine have a disability, being one of the most stigmatized and neglected in this deprived community. While many may not self-identify as persons with disabilities despite experiencing significant difficulties in functioning and participating, the increasing number of older persons in this region poses a significant challenge to ensure the full exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. In this crisis, they are denied their autonomy, and their role in the community is dismissed as irrelevant and burdensome in their own government-controlled area and in the non-government controlled areas.

HelpAge International in Ukraine has provided humanitarian assistance and support for over 6 years to older people with a focus on developing community safe spaces and home visiting programmes where Protection and Inclusion are the overarching principles to shape the response to limit the effects of armed conflict on their daily lives. In line with the [International humanitarian](https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf) law the work protects older people who do not take part in the fighting, but are increasing affected by the ongoing crisis in the region.

With stories from a report called [Missing Millions](https://www.helpage.org/newsroom/press-room/press-releases/millions-of-older-people-with-disabilities-risk-being-excluded-from-humanitarian-assistance-new-report-reveals-/) as quote from an 87-year-old man in eastern Ukraine said: "My wife stayed in the basement all the time. I used to go outside sometimes, but she couldn't go out because of the stairs. It affected her a lot " highlights the impact of the crisis in denial of basic rights.

1. Please provide information on the engagement of your organization with the government and/or military authorities relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict.
   1. Who initiated the engagement?

HelpAge leads Age and Disability Technical Working Group (ADTWG) since 2016. This group provides technical assistance relating to the issues of disability to the representatives of local governmental authorities including Regional Social Protection Department, Pension Funds Departments and Ministry for Reintegration of the Temporary Occupied Territories. During regular meetings conducted at the field level – in Sloviansk and Severodonetsk and national level – in Kyiv we share tips and recommendations regarding protection of conflict affected older peopleincluding recommendations how to protect older people and people with disabilities during COVID-19. Also, we provide tips regarding protection of older people living in nursing homes during COVID-19 pandemic. During ADTWG meetings HelpAge make referrals to local authorities in order to ensure the exercise of the right of older people who do not have an official disability to receive assistive products. Within the framework of ADTWG HelpAge provides trainings for all stakeholders on Humanitarian Inclusion Standards of older people and people with disabilities. These trainings involve SADDD data collection and using Washington Group Questionnaire for determination of disability. Before the onset of our projects, we communicate with local authorities in order to determine the most vulnerable older people without support. We take part in advocacy and round tables at the national level. Our task is to share the best international practices regarding work with older people and people with disabilities and to teach local authorities how to work within the framework of human rights-based approach.

* 1. What was the motivation, purpose, and outcome of these engagements?

Our motivation is ensuring inclusion of all older people and people with disabilities based on their needs only without discrimination.

* 1. Was Article 11 of the CRPD and/or UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) discussed in these engagements?

Yes, we discussed it during ADTWG meetings and during round tables on observance of human and civil rights and freedoms arranged by Consortium ACCESS IV with representatives of Parliament and Cabinet of Ministers.

1. Please provide information on whether your organization engages with the government on laws or statutes that punish criminal acts that specifically target persons with disabilities.

Not applicable

1. Please provide information on relevant legislation and policies related to the following:
   1. Are persons with disabilities excluded from serving in the armed forces on the basis of their disability? Do you engage with the government on this issue?

No, people with disabilities are not excluded from serving in the armed forces on the basis of their disability. Citizens of Ukraine are exempted from military service if they are recognized by military medical commissions as unfit for military service due to their state of health. No, we do not engage with the government on this issue.

* 1. Do policies or programs exist that allow persons serving in the armed forces to continue serving in cases where they acquire a disability? Do you engage with the government on this issue?

Yes, there is an order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on changes

to the Instruction on the organization of execution of the Regulations on passing by citizens of Ukraine of military service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine No. 422 dated 22.08.2018. This order allows persons who have received injuries and disabilities during the service to renew their contract and continue to serve in the Armed Forces or law enforcement agencies if they so wish. This also applies to those servicemen who have been declared unfit for health by military medical commissions. But people with mental, sensory, psychological diseases, mental and behavioral disorders will not be able to continue service in the army and law enforcement agencies. No, we do not engage with the government on this issue.

* 1. What supports are available to assist persons experiencing psychosocial trauma as a consequence of armed conflict (civilian, current military, or former military)? Do you engage with the government on this issue?

In HelpAge a key component of the work at community and home base level is to provide psycho-social services to older civilians. This has proven to be a lifeline for many isolated older single and married couples. Data has shown increasing levels of depression and anxiety living in this situation of fear of conflict, degradation of the community and social services and migration of the younger community, leaving older people at increased risk.

* 1. Are there differential services granted to veterans with disabilities on the one hand and civilians with disabilities on the other? Do you engage with the government on this issue?

Differential services on a free basis are provided to civilians with disabilities of group I, as well as veterans with disabilities, war participants and persons covered by the Law of Ukraine "On the status of war veterans, guarantees of their social protection". No, we do not engage with the government on this issue.

* 1. Are there veterans groups with disabilities and do they interact with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) on protection or general disability rights issues?

There are several veteran groups with disabilities and they are interacting with organizations of persons with disabilities and with government on protection or general disability rights issues as well inclusion of veterans with disabilities into social life.

1. Please provide information on how civil society, specifically OPDs, are involved in the process to identify and address discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding operations. In this geographical location the civil society is mainly providing direct services to different marginalised groups to improve lives; HelpAge Ukraine works in a consortium approach with other humanitarian actors to provide life saving support to the affected communities and strongly engaged in advocating for the rights of person with disabilities across the life course to ensure they have equal access to live saving services and maintain their health and well-being. This allows the work to continue in a safe and effective way. The advocacy is focused at the UN Cluster level through the UN network, who have the relationship with the State and the non-government controlled authorities.

­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­